

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

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CIAE-00 MC-01 L-01 EB-03 RSC-01 /040 W

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R 310830Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1450

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

CINCPAC

SECDEF WASHDC

S E C R E T SINGAPORE 4389

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652 GDS

TAGS: MILI, SN, RP

SUBJ: SINGAPORE SALE OF M-16 RIFLES TO PHILIPPINES

REF: A. STATE 237439 (NOTAL)

B. SINGAPORE 4324 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: ON OCTOBER 30 I SAW MINISTER GOH AND MADE POINTS SET FORTH REF A. GOH EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD RESPONDED TO URGENT REQUEST FROM PHILIPPINE UNDERSECRETARY SALIENTES AND ASSUMED U.S. WOULD NOT OBJECT IN VIEW OF CLOSE USG SECURITY RELATIONSHIP WITH PHILIPPINES. HE SAID GOS HAD RECEIVED ANOTHER REQUEST FROM THAI POLICE TO PURCHASE 25,000 M-16 RIFLES AND PROMISED TO SEND A LETTER REQUESTING USG APPROVAL. FROM OUR DISCUSSION I AM RELATIVELY CONFIDENT THAT DR. GOH NOW UNDERSTANDS SERIOUSNESS WITH WHICH WE VIEW THIS VIOLATION OF THE 1969 AGREEMENT AND NEED FOR ADVANCE WRITTEN APPROVAL BY USG IN SUCH CASES. END SUMMARY.

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1. IN ACCORDANCE REF A INSTRUCTION I RAISED PROBLEM OF GOS SALE OF M-16 RIFLES TO PHILIPPINES WITH DEFENSE MINISTER GOH ON OCT 30. I PREFACED MY REMARKS BY NOTING THAT U.S. VALUED THE COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIP WHICH WE HAVE DEVELOPED WITH SINGAPORE ON SECURITY MATTERS. THIS RELATIONSHIP HAD BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY SUCCESSFUL A-4 PROGRAM AND SALE OF OTHER U.S. MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO SINGAPORE AND USE OF SINGAPORE BUNKERING AND REPAIR FACILITIES BY USN WARSHIPS. FURTHERMORE, I HAD GAINED THE IMPRESSION THAT THIS RELATIONSHIP WAS CONSIDERED MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL TO BOTH GOVERNMENTS. DR. GOH GRANTED AFFIRMATIVELY.

2. I SAID, HOWEVER, THAT SINGAPORE'S SALE OF 10,000 M-16 RIFLES TO THE PHILIPPINES WITHOUT RECEIVING ADVANCE APPROVAL FROM THE USG HAD CAUSED GREAT CONCERN IN WASHINGTON. CONSEQUENTLY I HAD RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS TO EMPHASIZE TO THE GOS THE

GREAT IMPORTANCE THE USG ATTACHES TO THE STIPULATION IN THE STATE DEPT'S LETTER OF APPROVAL FOR THE COLT/SINGAPORE M-16 RIFLES FACILITY AGREEMENT DATED MARCH 26, 1969 THAT THE GOS MUST OBTAIN PRIOR WRITTEN APPROVAL BEFORE ANY M-16 RIFLES COULD BE EXPORTED FROM SINGAPORE. DESPITE THIS EXPRESS REQUIREMENT AND THE SIMILAR STIPULATION IN SINGAPORE'S AGREEMENT WITH COLT, WE HAD DISCOVERED BY ACCIDENT IN THE PHILIPPINES THAT A LARGE NUMBER OF M-16 RIFLES PRODUCED IN SINGAPORE HAD BEEN SHIPPED TO THE PHILIPPINES. THERE HAD BEEN NO PRIOR APPROVAL BY THE USG AND NOT EVEN ANY ADVANCE CONSULTATION OR NOTIFICATION BY THE GOS. CONSEQUENTLY I SAID MY GOVERNMENT HAD INSTRUCTED ME TO EXPRESS OUR GREAT CONCERN AND TO SAY THAT WE TOOK A SERIOUS VIEW OF THIS VIOLATION OF THE COMMITMENT.

3. MINISTER GOH, REACTING WITH A TOUCH OF INJURED INNOCENCE, SAID THAT PHILIPPINES UNDERSECRETARY SALIENTES HAD APPROACHED THE GOS INDICATING THAT THE PHILIPPINES HAD BEEN UNABLE TO BUY ANY RIFLES FROM COLT AND HAD SAID THEY NEEDED THEM URGENTLY. GOH THEN QUESTIONED IF IT WERE TRUE THAT THE GOP WAS UNABLE TO BUY FROM COLT, AND ASKED WHETHER THE USG WOULD HAVE APPROVED THE SALE IF THE GOS HAD SUBMITTED A REQUEST FOR OUR APPROVAL.

4. I REPLIED THAT I HAD NO INFORMATION ON WHETHER THE GOP HAD TRIED TO ACQUIRE ANY RIFLES FROM COLT, AND SAID I COULD NOT

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SAY HOW WASHINGTON WOULD HAVE RESPONDED TO A SINGAPORE REQUEST TO SELL RIFLES TO THE GOP. ALL THE EMBASSY COULD HAVE DONE WAS TO PUT THE QUESTION TO THE DEPT OF STATE. HOWEVER, I COMMENTED THAT I COULD SEE POLITICAL REASONS WHY APPROVAL MIGHT NOT HAVE BEEN GIVEN. I POINTED OUT THAT THESE RIFLES COULD BE USED AGAINST THE MUSLIM INSURGENTS IN THE SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES, AND IF NEWS TO THAT EFFECT LEAKED OUT THE GOVERNMENTS OF COUNTRIES HAVING MUSLIM MAJORITIES, SUCH AS MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA, MIGHT

REACT ADVERSELY NOT ONLY AGAINST SINGAPORE BUT ALSO AGAINST THE U.S. FOR ALLOWING SUCH A SALE.

5. DR. GOH EXPRESSED MILD DISTRESS (DEAR, DEAR), REITERATED THAT SALIENTES HAD MADE AN URGENT REQUEST TO THE GOS ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE RIFLES WERE NOT AVAILABLE FROM COLT, AND COMMENTED THAT HE DID NOT THINK THE U.S. WOULD OBJECT IN VIEW OF THE CLOSE USG SECURITY RELATIONSHIP WITH THE PHILIPPINES. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT IT WAS JUST AS WELL WE HAD BROUGHT THIS UP BECAUSE THE GOS HAD RECEIVED ANOTHER REQUEST FROM THE THAI POLICE TO PURCHASE 25,000 M-16 RIFLES FROM SINGAPORE AND SAID HE SUPPOSED HE SHOULD SEND A LETTER REQUESTING OUR APPROVAL.

6. I AGREED THAT SUCH A LETTER SHOULD BE SENT AND PROMISED IT WOULD BE FORWARDED TO WASHINGTON FOR CONSIDERATION. I WENT ON TO POINT OUT THAT WHEN FACED WITH A VIOLATION OF A MUNITIONS CONTROL LICENSING AGREEMENT, THE U.S. HAD A NUMBER OF OPTIONS. ALTHOUGH THERE WAS NO AUTOMATIC SANCTION, THE USG COULD REVOKE TEMPORARILY OR PERMANENTLY THE LICENSE UNDER WHICH THE RIFLES WERE PRODUCED. FURTHERMORE, WE COULD REFUSE TO ISSUE LICENSES FOR FUTURE SALES OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO A COUNTRY WHICH WAS UNWILLING TO HONOR ITS OBLIGATIONS IN CONNECTION WITH LICENSING AGREEMENTS. RE PROSPECTIVE THAI PURCHASE, I POINTED OUT THE GOS WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO OBTAIN CONCURRENCE FROM COLT. GOH INDICATED THAT THE AGREEMENT WITH COLT PERMITTED SALES TO THAILAND, BUT ADDED THAT THE GOS HAD SUCH BAD RELATION WITH COLT THAT IT HAD CEASED TO ENGAGE IN ANY COMMUNICATIONS WITH THEM. GOH CLAIMED THAT THE GOS HAD DISCOVERED THAT MATERIAL (PROBABLY FORGINGS) SUPPLIED BY COLT UNDER THE LICENSING AGREEMENT COULD BE OBTAINED ELSEWHERE AT 20 PERCENT OF THE COST CHARGED BY COLT.

7. GOH REITERATED THAT HE WOULD SEND US A LETTER REQUESTING
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APPROVAL OF THE PROPOSED THAI PURCHASE, AND THEN SWITCHED SUBJECT TO DISCUSS CURRENT CONDITION OF THE U.S. ECONOMY AND POSSIBLE EFFECT OF ITS IMPACT ON SINGAPORE. WHEN MEETING BROKE UP I EXPRESSED MY REGRET AT HAVING HAD TO SEE HIM ABOUT THE M-16'S BUT EXPRESSED THE HOPE I HAD HIS AGREEMENT THAT FROM NOW ON THERE WOULD BE NO MORE SALES OF U.S. MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO ANY THIRD COUNTRY WITHOUT ADVANCE CLEARANCE FROM THE U.S. HE NODDED AND EXPRESSED HIS UNDERSTANDING AND CONCURRENCE.

8. COMMENT: DR. GOH EXHIBITED MILD SURPRISE WHEN I MENTIONED THE STIPULATION IN THE LICENSING AGREEMENT REQUIRING ADVANCE USG WRITTEN APPROVAL PRIOR TO SALES TO THIRD COUNTRIES. HOWEVER, I FEEL QUITE SURE FROM OUR KNOWLEDGE OF BACKGROUND OF THIS SALE THAT HE WAS AWARE OF THIS REQUIREMENT AND THAT VIOLATION WAS DELIBERATE. I AM RELATIVELY CONFIDENT, HOWEVER, THAT HE HAS

NOW TAKEN OUR POINT AND UNDERSTANDS THAT ANY FURTHER VIOLATION
WOULD INEVITABLY LEAD TO IMPOSITION OF SANCTIONS DESCRIBED
PARA 5 REF A. WE WILL ENDEAVOR TO OBTAIN FURTHER INFO ON THE
THAI SALE. EMBASSY BANGKOK MAY WISH TO COMMENT.
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